MARVEL COMICS
5
PARENTAL ADVISORY
50 YEARS
CLAREMONT • SALAZAR • LOPEZ
WOLVERINE
MADRIPOOR KNIGHTS
CAPTAIN AMERICA -
BLACK WIDOW -
AND WOLVERINE -
BRING ABOUT EARTH'S
LAST DAYS!

JEFFREY VEREGGE

Jeffrey Veregge, 50, passed away April 12, 2024, after a courageous battle with lupus. A member of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Veregge created a style he called "Salish geek," which combined Native American art, graphic design and comic-book heroes. His striking covers on *Red Wolf* and *Heroes Reborn* stood out from everything else on comic shelves. In 2018, The Smithsonian opened Veregge's exhibition "Of Gods and Heroes," which included his epic mural for the Museum of the Native American in New York. His work on comic covers and in public spaces leave a fantastic legacy that will long be remembered. Our hearts go out to his family and friends.

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS STORY TAKES PLACE SHORTLY AFTER **UNCANNY X-MEN #268**!

HEROES—RISE AGAIN!

CAPTAIN AMERICA, the **BLACK WIDOW** and **WOLVERINE** have teamed up on a mission in **MADRIPOOR**, where the three of them first met decades ago. Looking to keep a devastating weapon from falling into the wrong hands, our heroes met up with local crime lord **TYGER TIGER**, who had hidden the device on her person.

The weapon was a tempting prize to Madripoor's criminal underbelly, who kidnapped Tyger to extract the device. But even **SAPPHIRE STYX** and her psychic attacks were unable to wrest it from Tyger's impenetrable armor, so the weapon was instead put up for auction with Tyger included.

Widow infiltrated that auction, but her plan was cut short by the arrival of **THE HAND**, a mystic band of assassins, who kidnapped Tyger, Sapphire and Widow. Wolverine and Cap pursued the Hand to their jungle base, discovering a plot by **MATSUO TSURAYABA**--*Jōnin* of the Hand--and his superior, known only as a **SAIKŌ JŌNIN**, to transform Widow into one of their master assassins--a plot that goes back to Widow's first encounter with them back in 1941! The heroes interrupted the proceedings, only to be transformed themselves, becoming dark reflections of the heroes they once were...

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MADRIPOOR HIGHTOWN-- IN WHAT USED TO BE THE UNITED STATES CONSULATE-- A HEARTBEAT OR TWO AFTER THE END OF LAST ISSUE...
SEE BLOOD.
SMELL BLOOD.
TASTE BLOOD.
CRAVE BLOOD.
I'M A HUNTER.
I WANT PREY.
DUMBASS HUMAN WANNABE BABY JŌNIN THINKS HE HOLDS THE CARDS HERE, THAT HE'S THE ONE IN CHARGE.
HE'S A FOOL.
WE THREE ARE THE ULTIMATE PREDATORS HERE.
TSARINA RULES.
CAPTAIN AMERICA IS HER SHIELD.
I'M THE WOLVERINE.
I'M HER BLADES.
WE YIELD TO NO ONE.
WE HUNT.
THEY DIE.
END OF STORY.

CLUELESS MATSUO DOESN'T GET THE MESSAGE.
CRITTER BESIDE HIM--SAIKO JONIN OF THE HAND--KNOWS BETTER.
REALIZES THEY'RE IN A FIGHT.
GENIN--
--BRING ME MY PETS!
I THINK YOU MAY HAVE UNDERESTIMATED YOUR ADVERSARIES, YOUNG JONIN.
THESE LOOK LIKE NO ONE'S "PETS."
MATSUO TSURAYABA, YOUR GOAL WAS TO MAKE ME YOUR MINDLESS TOY.
YOU HAVE FAILED.
I AND CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE WOLVERINE ARE "HEROES" NO LONGER, BUT THEIR TOTAL OPPOSITES.
THE BLACK WIDOW IS NO ONE'S SLAVE.
NATASHA ALIANOVNA ROMANOFF, BORN NEVER TO SERVE--
--BUT TO RULE!
BRAVE TALK FOR SOMEONE WITH THAT FAMILY NAME.
I AM NOT THEM.
WE WILL SEE.
REALLY?
ALL YOURS, CAP.
BOOT

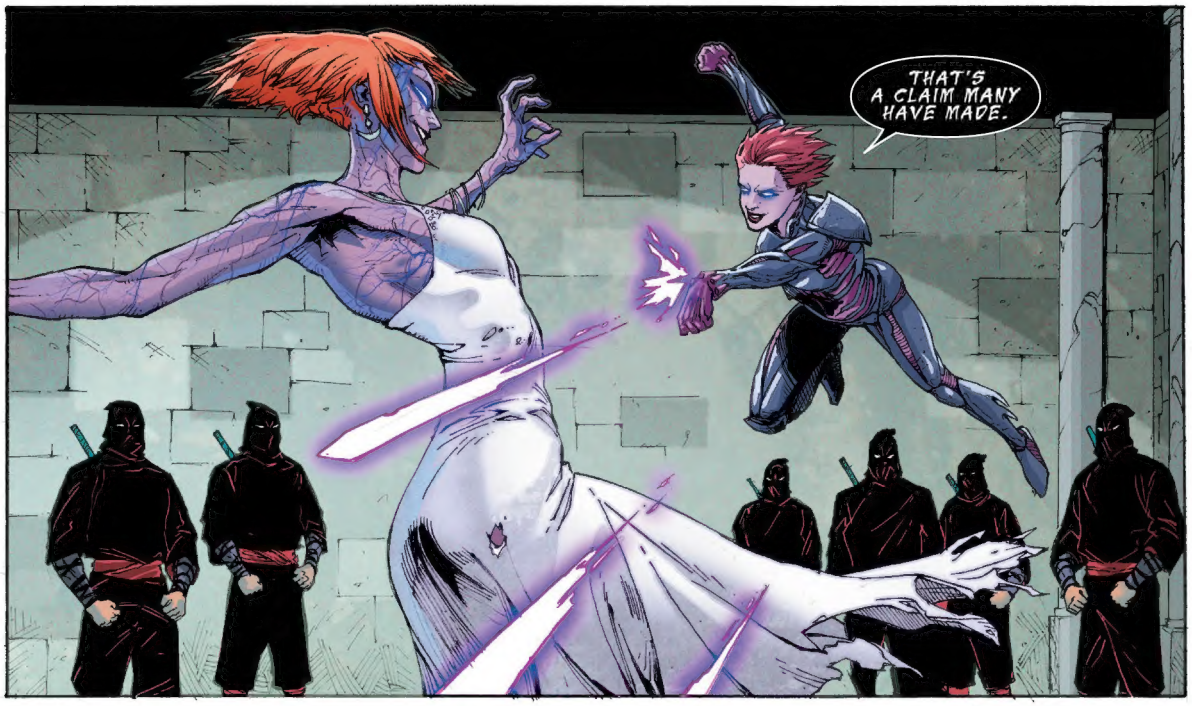
MY PLEASURE, TSARINA!

YOU ARE ALL FOOLS TO THINK ME SO EASY AN ADVERSARY.
AS JŌNIN, I AM NO MERE MAN.

I AM BOUND TO SOMETHING GREATER THAN MY FLESHLY SELF--
--THE TAMASHI NO ASASHIN--
--THE ASSASSIN OF THE SOUL!

WHEN CHALLENGED, I FIGHT.
WHEN I FIGHT, I TRIUMPH.
WHEN I TRIUMPH, I HEAR MY ADVERSARIES SCREAM--
--AS I WATCH THEM FALL TO THEIR DEATHS--
--IN AGONY!

SINCE ONE HOST BE UNAVAILABLE...
WHUA--?!
...ANOTHER SHALL BE MADE TO SERVE.
NO-- DON'T-- PLEASE!
HUSH NOW, LITTLE SAPPHIRE.
SEE HOW MUCH STRONGER OUR MERGER MAKES YOU?
HOW MUCH MORE BEAUTIFUL?
ACCEPT ME AND WE ARE ONE!
WE ARE GLORIOUS!
ALL YOU NEED DO IS SAY THE WORDS.
AND WE WILL KILL THE BLACK WIDOW!
LOOKS LIKE WE GOT OURSELVES A REAL FIGHT.
ME, 'TASHA AN' CAP COULDN'T BE HAPPIER.


THAT'S A CLAIM MANY HAVE MADE.

I'M STILL HERE!

BUT NOT FOR MUCH LONGER.

SO YOU SAY.

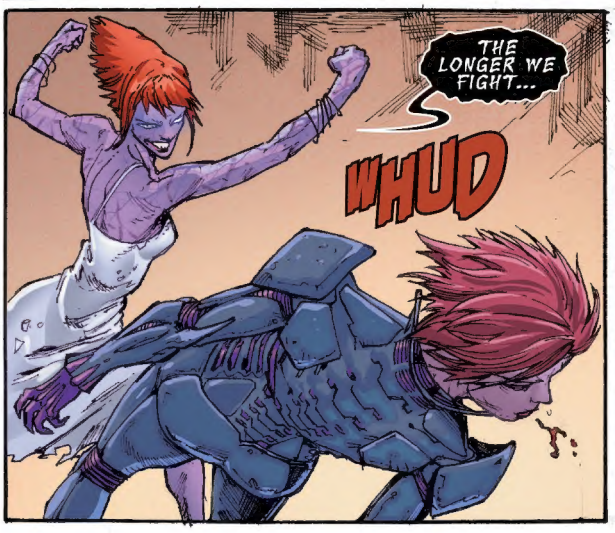
THEN LET MY ACTIONS SPEAK FAR LOUDER THAN THESE PUNY WORDS.

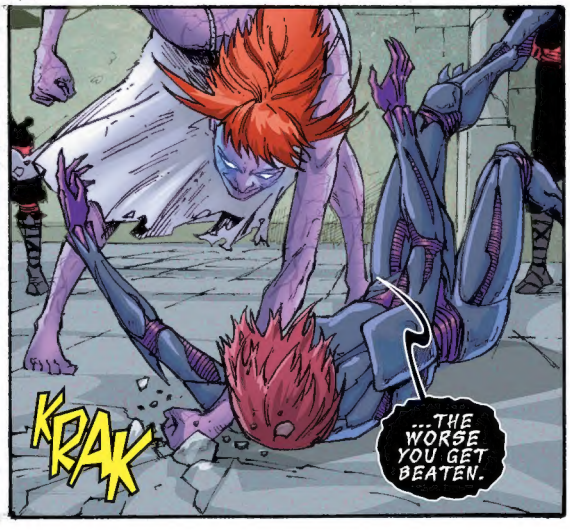
IS THIS YOUR BEST EFFORT?

I'M NOT IMPRESSED.

CARE TO TRY AGAIN?

WHERE ARE YOUR PROUD BOASTS NOW, WIDOW?


THE LONGER WE FIGHT...
WHUD


KRAK
...THE WORSE YOU GET BEATEN.

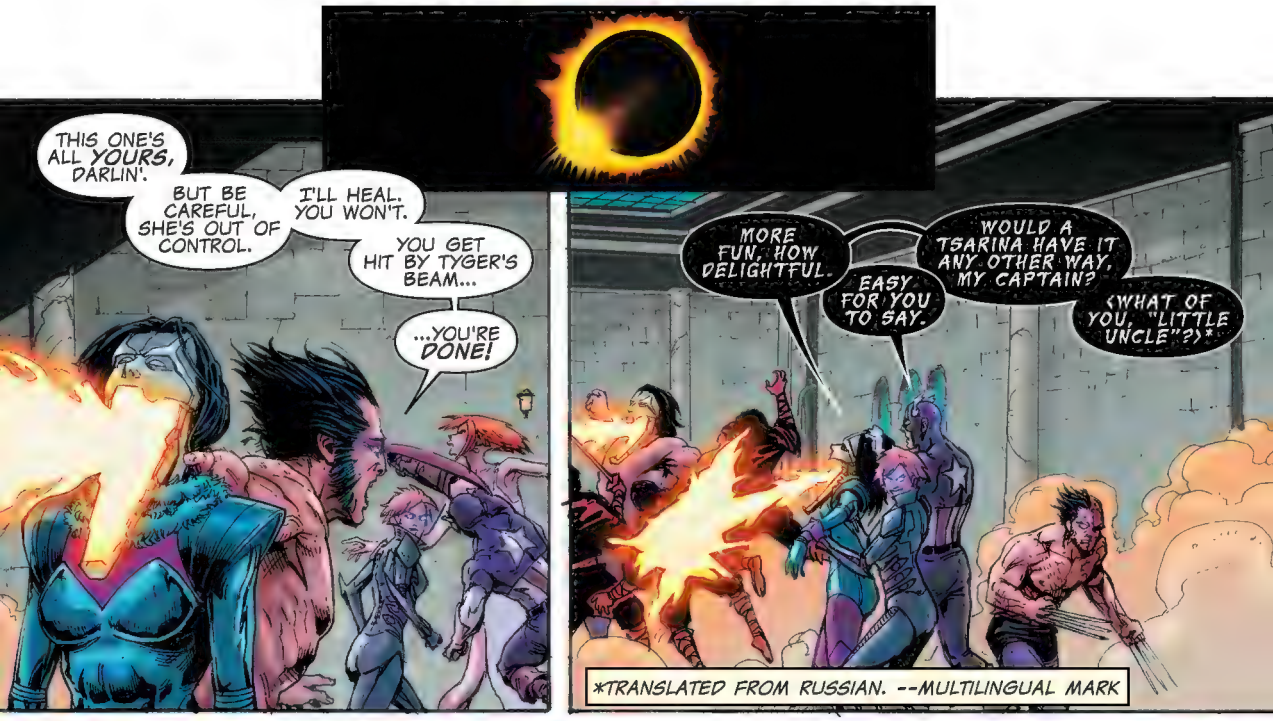
WOULDN'T COUNT ON THAT EVEN IF 'TASHA WAS FIGHTIN' THE PAIR OF YOU SOLO.
T'NIGHT, SHE HAS BACKUP.
TYGER AN' THE WEAPON SHE SWIPED HAVE BECOME ONE.
IN THE PROCESS, SHE'S REMAKIN' HERSELF IN ITS IMAGE.
AN' SHE'S GOT NO HESITATION USIN' IT.
GOOD F'R HER.

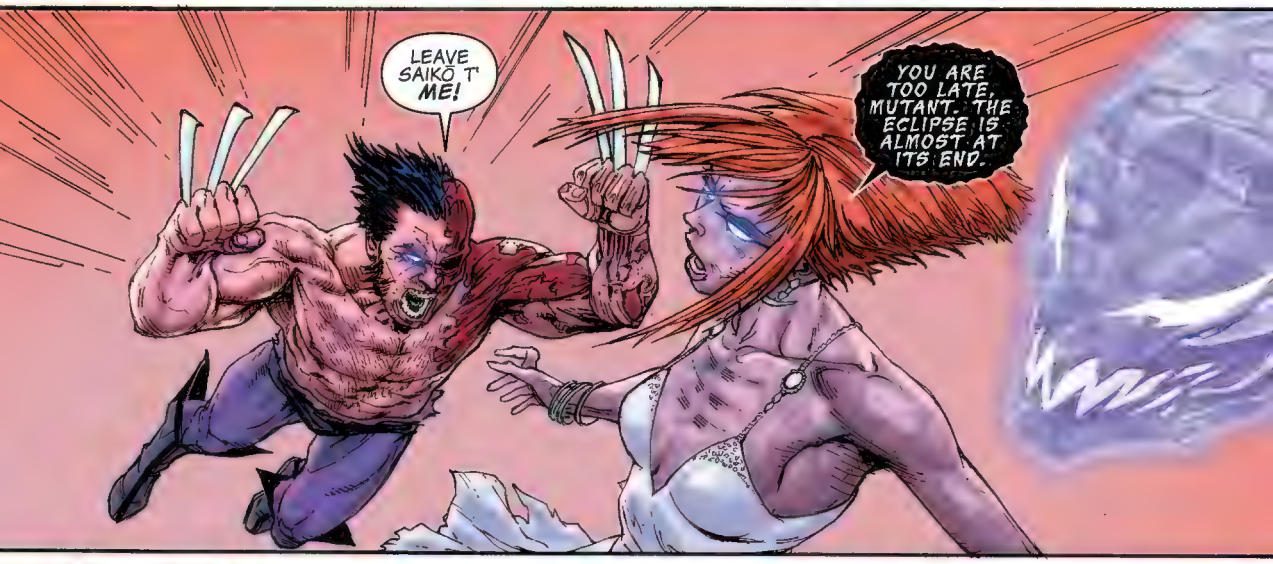
IN WITH THE OLD, OUT WITH THE NEW.
THIS WEAPON CAP WAS AFTER IS NO JOKE.
FIGURES. TAKES SOMETHING MORE THAN A POP GUN TO DRAW AN AVENGER ACROSS THE WORLD.
THE GENIN--THE UNLIVING MUSCLE OF THE ANCIENT GUILD OF ASSASSINS KNOWN AS THE HAND--DON'T HAVE A PRAYER.
TURNS OUT TYGER'S JUST GETTIN' STARTED.
SEEMS LIKE THE NEXT ON HER LIST IS ME.
NO REASON. I'M JUST IN HER WAY.
FAR AS SHE'S CONCERNED, HER PLACE IN THE WORLD IS AT THE TOP.
TIME I REMINDED THE LADY WHO'S BOSS.

I HEAR NO MORE BOASTS, HUMANS.
TRUE, THE YOUNG JONIN HAS BEEN TAUGHT A LESSON HE HAS LONG DESERVED, BUT LITTLE ELSE HAS CHANGED.
THESE MOMENTS OF YOUR FREEDOM ARE HURTLING TO THEIR END.
THE HELL WITH THAT.
WE DON'T GIVE UP.
WE DON'T LOSE.
THIS SPELL, THIS ECLIPSE--THIS "HOUR OF THE DAMNED"--CHANGED US.
BUT SOME THINGS DON'T.
THE MORE IMPOSSIBLE THE ODDS...
...THE MORE DETERMINED WE ARE.

TYGER'LL REMEMBER THIS LESSON.
THEN IT'LL BE SAIKŌ-SAPPHIRE'S TURN. SO LOOKIN' FORWARD T' THAT.
MEANTIME, HALF MY BODY BURNS.
I LOSE AN EYE.
BUT ADAMANTIUM'S MERGED WITH BONE.
SAME AS ALWAYS, MY HEALING FACTOR STEPS IN.
AIN'T FELT THIS GREAT IN--AGES.
MY PHYSIOLOGY HELPING PUSH BACK AGAINST THE DARK "INFECTION"--BARELY.
NOW, FOR REAL--MY TURN.
WHAT'S THAT GLEAM ON MY BLADES?

SUNLIGHT.
THE ECLIPSE IS PASSING.
SO WHAT?
SO--
--EVERYTHING.
MY POWER, WHAT MAKES ME A MUTANT, IS TO HEAL.
HEALING MEANS GETTING BACK MY TRUE SELF.
I KNOW WHO I AM...
...I KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE--FOR ME...
...AND MY FRIENDS.
I KNOW WHAT HAS T' BE DONE TO SAVE US ALL.


THIS ONE'S ALL YOURS, DARLIN'.
BUT BE CAREFUL, SHE'S OUT OF CONTROL.
I'LL HEAL. YOU WON'T.
YOU GET HIT BY TYGER'S BEAM...
...YOU'RE DONE!
MORE FUN, HOW DELIGHTFUL.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.
WOULD A TSARINA HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY, MY CAPTAIN?
<WHAT OF YOU, "LITTLE UNCLE"?>*
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN. --MULTILINGUAL MARK


LEAVE SAIKO T' ME!
YOU ARE TOO LATE, MUTANT. THE ECLIPSE IS ALMOST AT ITS END.

KEY WORD HERE, DEMON, IS "ALMOST."
X-FOLK HAVE SAVED ALL CREATION WITH LESS.
AND PRETTY MUCH EACH AN' EVERY TIME--
--I WAS WITH THEM!
SLASH

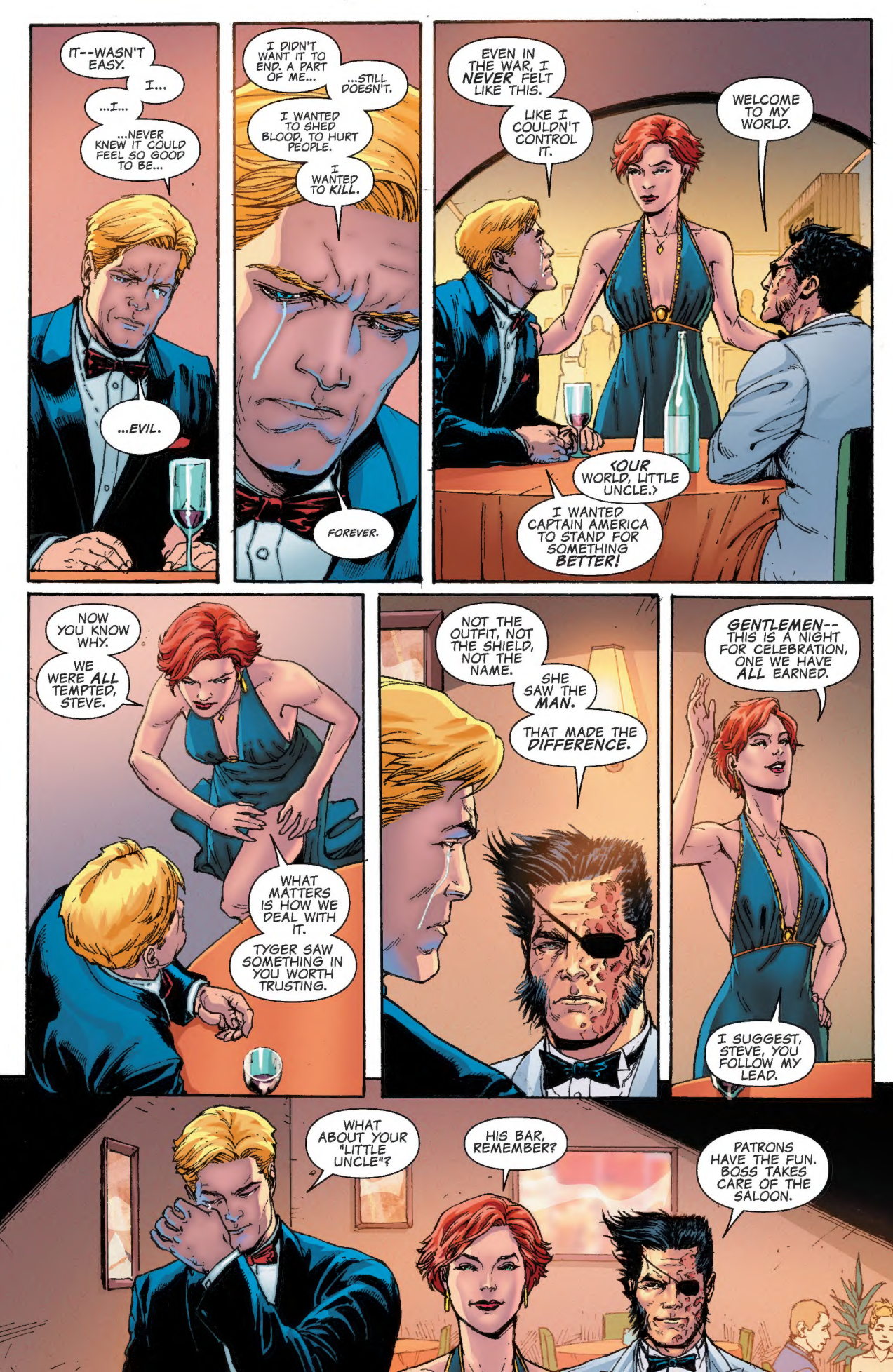
YOU'RE RIGHT, TIME IS RUNNING OUT.
BUT NOT FOR US.
SO HERE'S THE DEAL:
THE ECLIPSE IS COMING TO AN END.
COUNTER THE SPELL-- RESTORE US ALL--
--ME, THE BLACK WIDOW, CAPTAIN AMERICA AND TYGER--
--TO OUR TRUE SELVES.
"OR MY FRIENDS AND I WILL CROSS OVER TO YOUR REALM--
"--WITH YOUR 'WEAPON' TO LEAD THE WAY--
"--AND A NEW NAME TO MARK THE OCCASION.
BEHOLD THE FOUR FIENDS!
WE'RE GONNA KILL YOU ALL!

"WE'LL LOVE EVERY MOMENT, EVERY SCREAM!
"AND WHEN WE'RE DONE, THE HAND WILL BE NO MORE.
"WHO KNOWS WHERE WE'LL GO FROM THERE?
"TIME AN' SPACE ARE INFINITE--
"--YOU'VE GIVEN US ALL MY HUNGER FOR BLOOD--
"--MY LOVE FOR KILLING!
"WHAT YOU SET IN MOTION HERE'LL LIKELY LAST...
"...FOREVER!"
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.
YOUR CALL.

SMART PLAY.

THIS WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, HUMANS--OR FORGIVEN.
YOU WANT US, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND US.
JUST ONE THING TO BEAR IN MIND: YOU START THIS FIGHT AGAIN, WITH ANY OF US--
--NEXT TIME, WE WON'T BE SO LENIENT.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, TYGER?
I WILL NEVER BE "ALL RIGHT" AGAIN.
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
CAPTAIN, I WANT YOUR WORD.
YOU SAW WHAT I DID WITH THIS--
--WHAT IT DID TO MATSUO.
A READY-MADE ARMY AT THE DISPOSAL OF ANYONE WHO TOUCHES IT.
IF I KEEP IT, I WILL USE IT.
THAT MUST NEVER HAPPEN.
YOU, I TRUST.
TAKE IT, HIDE IT. TELL NO ONE. ESPECIALLY ME.
YOU HELPED SAVE ME.
NOW HELP SAVE THE WORLD.
YOU HAVE MY WORD.
<YOU LOOK AWFUL, LITTLE UNCLE.>
I'LL HEAL.
<I WISH THE SAME COULD BE SAID FOR STEVE AND TYGER.>
THAT'S THE THING ABOUT WOLVERINES AN' BLACK WIDOWS, DARLIN'.
WHAT COMES NATURALLY TO US--
<--OTHERS MUST LEARN THE HARD WAY.>

Epilogue
A few nights later
Madripoor LowTown-
The Princess Bar
"TYGER'S LOOKIN' GOOD."
"SHE'S BACK WHERE SHE BELONGS, LOGAN. CRIME LORD OF LOWTOWN.
"HAVE YOU HEARD FROM PSYLOCKE AND JUBILEE?"
"THEY'RE JUST DOWN THE BAR FROM TYGER--
"--WATCHING MY BACK WHILE I RECOVER.
"LIKE I CAN'T TAKE CARE OF MYSELF."
IT'S SO STRANGE--TYGER REPRESENTS MUCH OF WHAT I BECAME CAPTAIN AMERICA TO FIGHT.
AND YET?
AND YET.
EXCEPTIONS, MY FRIEND, OCCASIONALLY PROVE THE RULE.
THAT THEY DO.
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AROUND THESE PAST FEW DAYS.
YOU DO WHAT TYGER ASKED, ABOUT THE ALIEN WEAPON?
...
HID THE GIZMO PRETTY GOOD.
...
SOMEWHERE SAFE.
...
GOOD.


IT--WASN'T EASY.
I...
...I...
...NEVER KNEW IT COULD FEEL SO GOOD TO BE...
...EVIL.
I DIDN'T WANT IT TO END. A PART OF ME...
...STILL DOESN'T.
I WANTED TO SHED BLOOD, TO HURT PEOPLE.
I WANTED TO KILL.
FOREVER.
EVEN IN THE WAR, I NEVER FELT LIKE THIS.
LIKE I COULDN'T CONTROL IT.
WELCOME TO MY WORLD.
<OUR WORLD, LITTLE UNCLE.>
I WANTED CAPTAIN AMERICA TO STAND FOR SOMETHING BETTER!
NOW YOU KNOW WHY.
WE WERE ALL TEMPTED, STEVE.
WHAT MATTERS IS HOW WE DEAL WITH IT.
TYGER SAW SOMETHING IN YOU WORTH TRUSTING.
NOT THE OUTFIT, NOT THE SHIELD, NOT THE NAME.
SHE SAW THE MAN.
THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE.
GENTLEMEN-- THIS IS A NIGHT FOR CELEBRATION, ONE WE HAVE ALL EARNED.
I SUGGEST, STEVE, YOU FOLLOW MY LEAD.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR "LITTLE UNCLE"?
HIS BAR, REMEMBER?
PATRONS HAVE THE FUN. BOSS TAKES CARE OF THE SALOON.

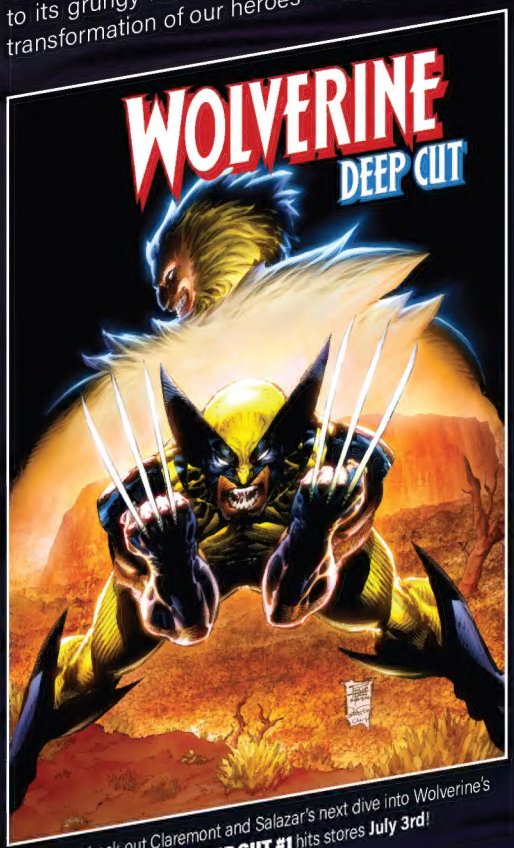
WE'VE ALL EARNED THE RIGHT TO CELEBRATE.
I UNDERSTAND NOW WHY MALEN'LIY DYADYA--MY LITTLE UNCLE--LIKES THIS ISLAND.
THE LINES HERE BETWEEN SHADOW AND LIGHT, GOOD AND EVIL, WINNING AND LOSING MAY APPEAR BLURRED--
--BUT, IN TRUTH, THEY ARE VERY CLEAR.
PROVIDED ONE KNOWS WHERE--AND HOW--TO LOOK.
THE STRUGGLE MAY SEEM TO BE FOR SOMETHING TANGIBLE.
BUT WHAT MATTERS IN THE END ARE THE HEARTS AND SOULS OF THE COMBATANTS.
A DESIRE TO CONQUER.
OR TO BE FREE.
AND THE PRICE WE'RE WILLING TO PAY TO ACHIEVE IT.
HEROES WILL ALWAYS STAND BY ONE ANOTHER.
AND TRUE FRIENDS WILL ALWAYS FIND A WAY TO WIN.
UNTIL THE DAY COMES WHEN THEY HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEIR FRIENDSHIP--
--AND THEIR DUTY.
...BETWEEN OUR FRIENDSHIP--
--AND A CAUSE.
SNIKT
END.

MADRIPOOR HIGHLIGHTS

So great to see these three together again -- for the first (or second) time! ***UNCANNY X-MEN #268*** casts a very long shadow, from the clever dueling timeline structure to its iconic (and oft-imitated) cover. And it boasts a veritable murderers' row of talent, from writer **CHRIS CLAREMONT** and penciler **JIM LEE** to inker **SCOTT WILLIAMS** and colorist **GLYNIS OLIVER** to letterer **TOM ORZECHOWSKI**. That would be a legendary issue, even without the first meeting of three of Marvel's heavy hitters.

Suffice it to say, we set Chris quite the challenge following up that issue, but we also knew there was plenty to mine in the present day of Madripoor, where exactly what the Hand was after was never fully explored. True to form, Chris came in with tons of ideas, chief among them a series of propulsive action sequences across the various locales of Madripoor.

We knew we'd need a formidable artist to do justice to what Chris had in mind, and it was just our luck that **EDGAR SALAZAR** was available. Not only did he make those action sequences sing, propelling everything with real momentum from the moment Cap crashes through that window in issue #1, he also brought real depth and texture to Madripoor, making every piece feel lived in and familiar -- even never-before-seen places like Capristi's and the caves beneath the city. Colorist **CARLOS LOPEZ** brought even more texture to Madripoor, from its gleaming Hightown skyscrapers to its grungy harborside dump. He also cooked up some wild effects for the Saikō Jōnin and the transformation of our heroes -- truly essential story beats!



Be sure to check out Claremont and Salazar's next dive into Wolverine's past when **WOLVERINE: DEEP CUT #1** hits stores **July 3rd**!

Letterer **CORY PETIT** expertly balanced Chris' signature dialogue with Edgar and Carlos' gorgeous art, pulling it all off in style. And speaking of style, he drew clear inspiration from the hand-lettering of the original "Madripoor Knights," while still making it feel as fresh as the newest comics on the shelves. His wizardry is as powerful as anything the Jōnin can conjure!

To top it all off, we had five stunning covers from **PHILIP TAN** and **SEBASTIAN CHENG**. I mentioned how iconic Jim Lee's UNCANNY X-MEN #268 cover has become, but Philip and Sebastian more than held their own over the course of this series, delivering stunner after stunner. Each one draws us further into the intrigue of the Hand's sinister plot, culminating in that killer final cover of our transformed heroes.

It's been an absolute blast, but the fun doesn't have to stop here! Chris and Edgar have reunited for another untold story set within Chris' ***UNCANNY X-MEN*** run -- this time during the team's stay in Australia, as Wolverine sets out on his own adventure. Unexpected villains, old friends and new surprises abound – you're not going to want to miss this one! Be sure to check out ***WOLVERINE: DEEP CUT #1*** when it hits shelves next month!

--DREW BAUMGARTNER

KAMIC RIDER
MARIKA